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Brooke Boyett

Communications Director | (713) 591-4102

Laura Lucas

Deputy Communications Director | (832) 778-1088

ocamedia@harriscountytexas.gov

HARRIS COUNTY DESIGNATED “SOLSMART SILVER” FOR SOLAR ENERGY LEADERSHIP

(Harris County, TX) – April 6, 2023 — Commissioners Court announced this week that Harris County received, for the first time, the Silver designation from the national [SolSmart](#) program for encouraging the growth of clean, affordable solar energy at the local level.

As a SolSmart Silver designee, Harris County has adopted nationally recognized best practices to advance solar market growth. The County worked with SolSmart's no-cost technical assistance team to increase local knowledge of solar energy so the entire community can benefit.

“I am proud to have led Harris County in becoming the first SolSmart County in Texas. I hope this designation demonstrates that we are taking concrete steps to address one of the most pressing issues of our time - climate change - and will inspire other Counties to join us,” said **Commissioner Adrian Garcia**. “In 2019, I became laser focused in making Harris County a SolSmart community. I knew this designation would better position Harris County to attract new investments and economic development to our area. Companies and investors are increasingly looking for locations prioritizing sustainability and clean energy, and receiving this designation signals to these groups that Harris County is committed to creating a more sustainable future. This can lead to job creation, increased revenue, and a more robust local economy, and Precinct 2 is on its way to becoming the Clean Energy Capital of the country.”

SolSmart is led by the Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and is funded by the U.S. Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office. Nearly 500 cities, towns, counties, and regional organizations have achieved SolSmart designation since the program launched in 2016.

To achieve SolSmart Silver designation, Harris County has trained permitting and inspection staff on best practices for permitting solar energy and solar-plus storage systems. The planning and zoning department has clarified that solar energy is allowed by-right in all major zones. These and other actions taken will make it faster, easier, and more affordable for local residents, businesses, and nonprofit organizations to install solar in this community.

“This designation reflects the innovation in Harris County that continues to make our region a global energy leader,” said **Commissioner Lesley Briones**. “We will continue to be the Energy Capital of the World by leading both in the traditional energy sector and in renewable and sustainable energy. We must remain adaptable in the face of new challenges and opportunities to continue growing our economy and driving Harris County forward.”

As a SolSmart designee, Harris County is helping promote best practices in solar permitting, demonstrating leadership by installing solar photovoltaics on County facilities, and exploring the integration of battery storage and electric vehicle charging stations with on-site solar deployment. This

work aims to enable more local solar opportunities and spur market demand for these smart technologies. The actions the County has taken will help encourage solar companies to do business in the area, driving economic development and creating local clean energy jobs.

"We are honored to receive SolSmart Silver designation and especially proud to be the first county in Texas to be a SolSmart community and the first local government in the Gulf Coast region to achieve this distinction," said **Lisa Lin, Director of Sustainability, Office of County Administration**. "This recognition builds upon the implementation of our Clean Energy Strategy and Climate Action Plan for Internal Operations, and we hope to build more pathways to make reliable renewable energy affordable and accessible to all. "

Local governments achieve SolSmart designation by meeting established criteria that are based on national best practices for building solar-friendly communities. The SolSmart team of experts offers no-cost technical assistance and resources to help communities put these practices into action. Those that meet the criteria are designated SolSmart Platinum, Gold, Silver, or Bronze.

To learn more about SolSmart visit [SolSmart.org](https://solsmart.org)

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About the Office of County Administration: Established by Commissioners Court in June 2021, the Office of County Administration (OCA) is tasked with supervising day-to-day operations and implementing Commissioners Court's priorities and policies for Harris County. For more information, visit <https://oca.harriscountytexas.gov>.

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